



OPERATIONS DURING CONTINGENCIES AND CRISES: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Last Updated: 04 November 2016

While a common operations framework covers many considerations common to steady-state and contingency conditions, a number of processes are used specifically to design, plan, execute, and assess contingencies, crisis responses, and major operations. These processes address the shorter timeframes and resource constraints associated with contingencies. The processes governing operations during steady-state conditions have evolved comparatively recently; the processes used to plan and execute contingency and crisis operations have been around for quite some time. Nonetheless, it is useful to think of contingencies as logical extensions of and branches to ongoing, steady-state strategies.

In an ideal world, all potential contingencies could be anticipated and branch plans could be developed to deal with them. In the real world, unanticipated events occur and adversaries make unexpected moves, and so military decision-making processes have evolved that deal flexibly with crises, allowing commanders and their staffs to rapidly adapt existing plans to meet unexpected situations.

In general, Air Force personnel design contingency operations using the principles of the common operational framework. They then plan for contingencies using the [joint operation planning process](#); specifically, they use the [joint operation planning process for air](#) to produce an air operations plan for the [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR), who is normally dual-hatted as the [joint force air component commander](#) (JFACC). During execution, the COMAFFOR/JFACC uses a tasking cycle to carry out plans and manage the iterative, ongoing operational tempo and “battle rhythm.” The tasking cycle creates a repeated (often daily) articulation of the overall airpower strategy and planning efforts. The tasking cycle is also the process whereby the commander and planners can connect their plans’ aims to specific tactical-level actions, unit missions, and specific targets. Assessment is conducted both during and after execution. During operations, tactical-level assessment helps evaluate battle damage and generate re-attack recommendations. At the operational level, ongoing assessment uses measures of effectiveness to determine whether desired effects are being created and objectives are being achieved. Broadly speaking, however, assessment concepts and methods are generally applicable and fit within the common operations framework.